

***A HOMELESSNESS  
STRATEGY FOR  
RUNNYMEDE  
2006 – 2009***



*Produced by Runnymede Borough Council in conjunction with  
Runnymede & Spelthorne Homelessness Task Group*

**November 2006**



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# 1 . I n t r o d u c t i o n

- 1.1 Despite its relative affluence, homelessness is a problem in Runnymede. The high cost of housing makes it impossible for many households to access permanent accommodation locally. Fortunately the Borough does not have a significant street homeless problem but it is clear that there are many people who could be classed as “hidden homeless” i.e. where they are staying with friends and relatives on a temporary basis, whilst trying to find a housing solution.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on all local authorities to carry out a homelessness review and produce a homelessness strategy informed by the review. The requirement to produce a homelessness strategy every five years ensures that the Council takes a strategic, long term view of homelessness. The Government expectation is that the Homelessness Act will bring about a radical change in the way that central and local government, and all other partners, work together to tackle homelessness.
- 1.3 The Council launched its first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003, and this Strategy has now had its first review. This is our revised Homelessness Strategy which details how we will ensure that action is taken to meet the needs of homeless and potentially homeless people from 2006 to 2008. It also details how we will work towards improving current services and provision and proactively seek to prevent homelessness where possible. Essential to delivering these objectives are the many other agencies that deliver services to homeless people and the Council will continue its joint working with these organizations to achieve both the short, and long, term goals of the strategy.
- 1.4 The original strategy was overseen by a Homelessness Task Group set up to co-ordinate Runnymede Borough Council’s and Spelthorne Borough Council Homelessness Strategies. The Task Group has continued to meet throughout the past year to monitor the delivery of the Action Plan and has overseen, and approved, this revised version of the Strategy and the updated and amended Action Plan.
- 1.5 It is important that a comprehensive approach is taken to dealing with homelessness. At Runnymede the need to prevent homelessness and to provide additional affordable housing is reflected right across, and at all levels of the Council. The Council’s Strategic Plan ‘Building on Excellence’ makes a commitment to reduce the incidence of homeless by -
  - Providing advice and assistance to homeless applicants, and working with other agencies to prevent homelessness
  - Ensuring that applicants are given clear information on the range of housing options available. Where possible this is to be made accessible electronically via the internet
  - Increasing availability of affordable housing
- 1.6 This Strategy includes a summary of the findings of the Homelessness Review, which was published in May 2003. These statistics have been updated to reflect the position at December 2005.

## 2. Strategy Vision and Purpose

- 2.1 The introduction of the Homelessness Act and the results of the subsequent review have provided the Council with an opportunity to reassess its homelessness services.
- 2.2 During the past 2 years, services have changed considerably to reflect the ethos of the new legislation. The Council believes that all homelessness is preventable and our services now reflect this by introducing direct, early intervention and addressing the main causes of homelessness, as identified in the Homelessness Review. This, combined with the widening of housing options, and the elimination of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families, has resulted in a more efficient and customer-focused homelessness and housing advice service.
- 2.3 Our long term vision is to end the incidence of homelessness in Runnymede. The specific aims for the period of this strategy are:
- To prevent and minimise homelessness wherever possible.
  - To work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide high quality services to people who do become homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
  - To avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for homeless households except in an emergency, and then only for a maximum period of 6 weeks.
  - To provide a positive and fair homelessness service that promotes and protects equality.
  - To reduce and minimise the negative experience and effects of homelessness.
  - To reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.
  - To provide affordable homes for homeless households.
- 2.4 A strong emphasis is placed on joint and partnership working. The aims of the strategy cannot be achieved in isolation. Joint protocols, policies and procedures are the foundation stones for the successful implementation of many of the schemes and projects that will be undertaken to meet the needs identified through the Homelessness Review.
- 2.5 This strategy is our response to the challenges set out in the Homelessness Act 2002 and other Government targets.

### 3. The Overall Objectives of the Strategy

3.1 The aims of the Strategy we published in 2003 were –

- To prevent and minimize homelessness.
- To work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide high quality services to people who do become homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
- To avoid the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for homeless households except in an emergency.
- To ensure that no one needs to sleep rough in Runnymede.
- To provide a positive and fair homelessness service that promotes and protects equality.
- To reduce and minimise the negative experience and effects of homelessness.

We want to make a real difference to homelessness in Runnymede. Our aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, widen housing options for homeless people, and to support a wide range of services to homeless and potentially homeless people in Runnymede.

In 2003 we set the following key objectives to meet our aims:

- To improve housing advice services in the Borough
- To improve the standard of temporary accommodation
- To improve customer care and customer involvement in the provision of homelessness and housing advice services
- To improve support to homeless households
- To maximise the availability of social housing and minimise evictions
- To monitor levels of, and services for, rough sleepers

A great deal has been achieved since these objectives were set and this has had an impact on homelessness. We therefore need to recast the original objectives to reflect the changing situation. Our new objectives are as follows:

**OBJECTIVE**

***PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS THROUGH MORE EFFECTIVE,  
COORDINATED PROVISION OF ADVICE***

3.2 During the last 2 years we have changed the way we address homelessness and have introduced new ways of working and new schemes to support these objectives. This has been done with the help of grants from the Government.

The role of our housing advisor has been extended and strengthened to further increase the prevention of homelessness wherever possible. New advice services have been introduced. Several of the schemes supporting this work are run in partnership with local agencies, notably Relate, Runnymede Rentstart and the Staines County Court Desk.

**OBJECTIVE**

***IMPROVED ACCESS TO THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR***

3.3 The private rented sector is an important source of housing supply. We are committed to maximising access to the privately rented sector and will work closely with private landlords to do this. We will continue to develop this area of work. Recent new initiatives include a private sector resettlement scheme, tenancy sustainment work and an accommodation finding scheme, which widens housing options and contribute to preventing homelessness. We have achieved considerable reductions in homeless acceptances since introducing these initiatives.

**OBJECTIVE**

***PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES TO HOMELESS AND  
POTENTIALLY HOMELESS PEOPLE***

3.4 We intend to build on our recent achievements by continuing to target resources on the key causes of homelessness, and by providing support to a wide range of services that support homeless and potentially homeless people. These services include those provided by education, health and housing providers in both the public and private sectors, and a range of statutory and voluntary organizations providing support to specific groups of people, such as families with children, those with mental health needs, learning difficulties and substance misuse problems.

Many of these services are not based within Runnymede but are part of a countywide or regional service. Housing may not be their primary function, but they nevertheless provide a service that may help in preventing homelessness or provide support to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>
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<b><i>MAKE BEST USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES</i></b>
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3.5 We set out our plans for ensuring the best use of our housing stock in our Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan. We will work to maximise our current resources, including land, staff, existing housing stock and partners.

We will also regularly review performance and this includes undertaking customer satisfaction surveys, and introducing monitoring systems to ensure equality and achieve the best possible outcomes.

We will take every opportunity to develop affordable housing in the Borough and encourage the owners of empty properties to bring them back into use.

We will train and develop our staff to make use of their knowledge and skills.

We will also continue to develop closer working relationships with a range of local agencies, to enhance the outcomes of our Strategy.

3.6 **Action Plans and Targets**

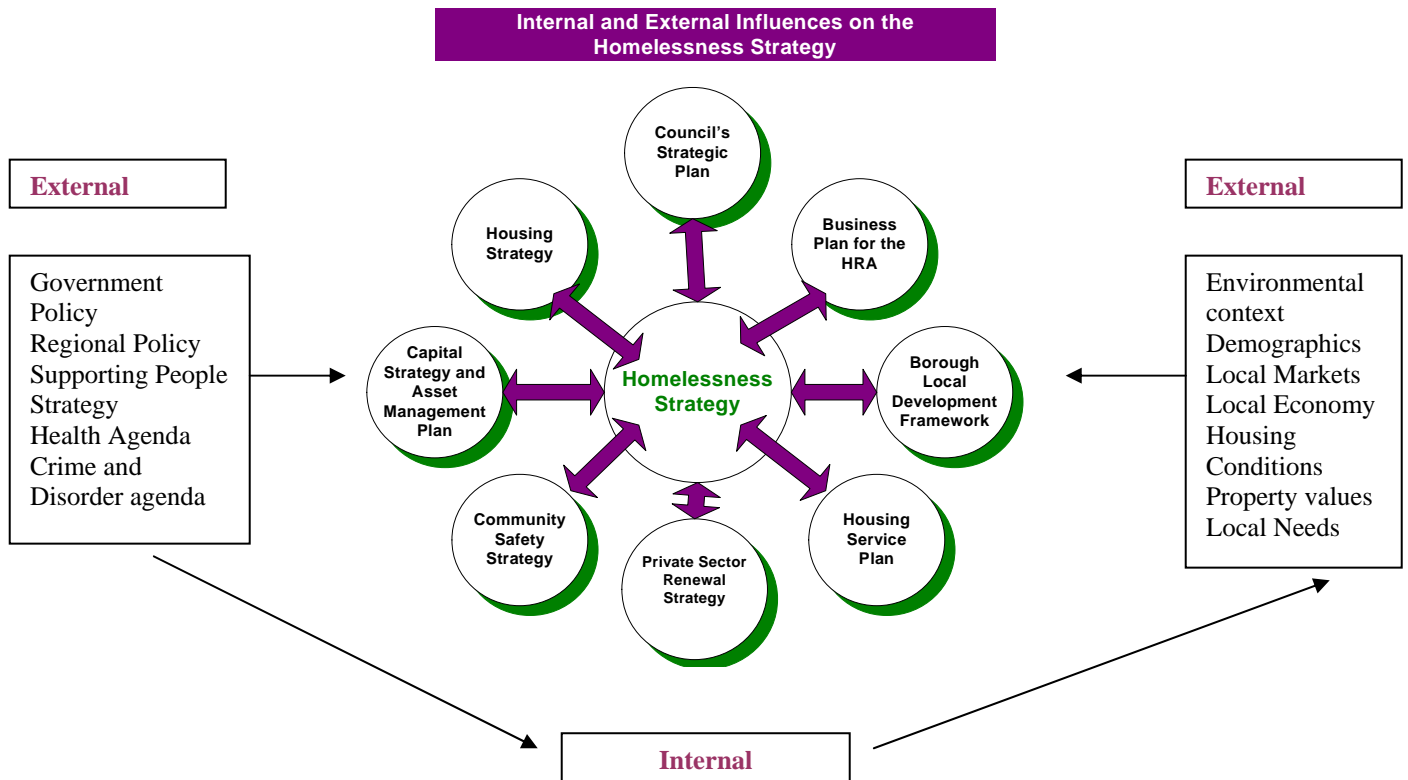
In Appendix 1 an action plan is provided and this will be used until the next review of this Strategy, which is proposed in 2008.

In preparation for our next Strategy we will undertake a homelessness audit in 2007.

Attached at Appendix 2 is a copy of the action plan that we adopted in 2003. This contains a statement of whether the targets have been achieved. The targets that have not yet been achieved have been included in the new action plan. In some circumstances actions are no longer appropriate and this too is explained.

## 4. Our Policy and Delivery Process

- 4.1 The Homelessness Strategy links with other corporate strategies and plans, as well as regional and national strategies. The Homelessness Strategy is just one element of our planning process. The diagram below shows how we developed our Strategy and made sure it is consistent with our overall set of policies and plans:



- 4.2 The Housing Strategy Statement and the Local Development Framework provide valuable information on housing demand and supply and should be read in conjunction with this Strategy.

## 5. Partnership Working and Consultation

- 5.1 Partnership working is essential to achieve the objectives in this Strategy. It is for this reason that the Homelessness Task Group was set up. The purpose of the group is to provide an arena for stakeholders who work with homeless people to impact upon policy, its implementation and homelessness provision.
- 5.2 There are many benefits to working in partnership with other agencies, notably the ability to maximise resources and avoid duplication, provide better services to residents, achieve best value, achieve higher standards and a better delivery of strategic objectives. The Homelessness Task Group meeting quarterly and offers the opportunity for members to share their knowledge and expertise and further their understanding of the issues affecting homeless people.
- 5.3 Many of the providers of services to homeless and potentially homeless people are part of the Homelessness Task Group. The membership is reviewed annually to ensure that the most appropriate agencies are included. Current membership includes the following organizations:
- Runnymede Borough Council
  - Spelthorne Borough Council
  - Surrey Primary Care Trust
  - West Surrey Mental Health Service
  - Surrey Supporting People Team
  - Windmill Drug and Alcohol Team
  - Look Ahead Housing and Care
  - Apex Housing Group
  - Airways Housing Group
  - Surrey Community Development Trust
  - Connexions
  - Runnymede Rentstart
  - Spelthorne Rentstart
  - Surrey Women's Aid
  - Runnymede Citizens Advice Bureau
  - Shelter West Sussex and Surrey
  - Thames Homeless Project
  - SADAS
  - Salvation Army Runnymede Borough Council East2West
  - Emmaus Surrey
- 5.4 Our new Strategy has been drawn up in consultation with members of the Homelessness Task Group and the many providers of services to homeless people in Runnymede. Our Strategy is reviewed by the Group regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the users of the homelessness service.
- 5.5 Additionally, the Runnymede and Spelthorne Health and Homelessness sub-group has been established to look at improved access and health care for homeless households. The group has enhanced partnership working with Primary Care Trust and Children's Services in the exchange of information and accessing services.

## 6. Summary of the Homelessness Audit Undertaken in 2003

A thorough homelessness audit was completed in 2003 and from this a number of issues were identified. Many of these have now been tackled, however, for completeness, some of the main findings of the audit are listed below.

### Needs and demand

- 6.1 The audit concluded that housing and related personal needs will continue to increase in Runnymede over the next three to five years and alter the scale and composition of homeless applications. Over the same period, the supply of new homes is likely to fall due to changes in funding mechanisms. The review therefore advocated that Runnymede Borough Council continued its efforts to increase affordable housing provision.

### Services

- 6.2 The audit stated that although our housing advice and homelessness service met the statutory obligations, it was primarily a *reactive* service and was not designed to deliver the new, preventative approach advocated by the Government through the Homelessness Act 2002 and Code of Guidance.
- 6.3 We invest significant sums in the voluntary sector and work in partnership to deliver many local advice, support and accommodation services to both statutory and non statutory homeless people (for example, through the Citizens Advice Bureau, Runnymede Rentstart and the Thames Haven Hostel). However the Audit identified that we should reappraise the scope and delivery of our own, and other agencies' housing advice functions, to create a more comprehensive, coordinated local 'housing options' service, distinct from the homelessness application process.
- 6.4 Homeless applicants in Runnymede often spend significant periods of time in our temporary hostel accommodation. Although this is preferable to Bed & Breakfast accommodation, customers are generally dissatisfied with the standards of hostels. The audit therefore advocated that we should make a determined effort to achieve a step change in the quality of temporary homes through a mix of alternative provision (for example making better use of the private rented sector), and remodeling of existing hostels, and improved site management.
- 6.5 The audit concluded that there was a perception that the service was centered on a "gate keeping role" and stated that we should seek to alter these perceptions through a mix of service and process redesign, staff training, customer involvement and culture change.
- 6.6 The Audit identified that our advice and homelessness services did not fully reflect the diversity and vulnerability of our customer base and we should do more to tailor and target support to people with extra needs, and make the service more accessible to 'hard to reach' groups.
- 6.7 The Audit said that we should build stronger links with other agencies in order to deal with 'non-housing' issues and to address the risk factors that feed homelessness (for example, drugs and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and youth alienation). These links should inform redesign of and changes to the advice, assessment and casework functions.

6.8 The Audit said that we should expand its web-based services and explore other forms of digital service delivery to maximize the use of new and future technology.

## **Supply and resources**

6.9 It was felt that Runnymede and other social landlords should also make the best use of the existing affordable housing stock.

6.10 It was felt that a stronger multi-agency commitment was needed to tackle homelessness. Operational links with key statutory services and the private sector did not deliver the range and depth of support that should be achievable in an area like Runnymede.

6.11 It was suggested that we needed to support and enable the provision for further specialist housing and support for people with extra needs, either within Runnymede, or via agreements to use accommodation in other areas nearby.

6.12 Arrangements to record and monitor advice and homelessness services were proposed in order to improve performance management. Improved casework monitoring should follow applicants through homelessness, even after they have had a statutory notification or if we have no statutory duty to rehouse.

6.13 The Audit said that we should reconsider its interpretation and application of data protection law and guidance, particularly as it affects the Housing Benefit service.

6.14 A joint approach was recommended to homelessness to be achieved by extending joint working and resource sharing with other local councils, partners and sectors. For example, we could encourage the provision of a duty court service and more debt advice services, through our links with the Community Services Legal Partnership.

6.15 It was felt that we should build on the input by customers into this review to involve and give them a clear, ongoing role in designing and scrutinising future services. For example, users should be involved in redesigning the housing reception facilities, customer care training for staff and developing digital services.

6.16 The audit outlined the housing needs of the area and highlighted the increasing demand for affordable housing. It also raised the issues of affordability.

## 7. Homelessness, Housing Need and Supply

### Who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

- 7.1 The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, sets out the framework within which local authorities are required to assist those who are homeless. Broadly, it defines someone as homeless if they have no accommodation that they are legally entitled to occupy in the UK or elsewhere overseas and which it is reasonable for them to occupy. Someone is “threatened with homelessness” if they will become homeless within 28 days.
- 7.2 Local authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for homeless people who are in priority need, provided that they are not homeless intentionally. The Homelessness Act 2002 has extended the definition of priority need, so that it now includes families, pregnant women, 16/17 year olds, young people leaving care, and those who are vulnerable due to old age, disability, mental illness, because they have been in the armed forces or prison, or who are vulnerable and less able to find their own accommodation for any other reason. People who are homeless in an emergency, such as fire or flood, and people fleeing violence, are also in priority need.

### Homelessness Applications 2003 to 2006

- 7.3 Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003 and the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, 156 households have applied to us as homeless. The table below shows the number of households who made an application and how many of these were accepted as homeless for each financial year. The table shows a decrease in acceptances received year on year for the past three years. This is due to our pro-active approach to the prevention of homelessness in Runnymede.

	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6
Homelessness applications	55	43	58
Homelessness acceptances	40	39	24

- 7.4 Once we have accepted a duty to assist a homeless household, temporary accommodation must be provided and a long-term solution sought. This may be an offer of accommodation through our Housing Needs register or through other housing options including assisting the household to secure suitable private sector accommodation.

### Main Causes of Homelessness

- 7.5 The following table outlines the main causes of homelessness for accepted applications made between 2003 and 2006.

<b>Reasons for Homelessness</b>	<b>2003/ 2004</b>	<b>2004/ 2005</b>	<b>2005/ 2006</b>
Parents\relatives\friends no longer willing to accommodate	16	20	12
Breakdown of relationship with partner – violent	4	6	0
Breakdown of relationship with partner – non violent	4	4	4
Mortgage arrears leading to repossession	0	0	0
Rent arrears – Housing Association	0	0	0
Rent arrears – Private rented	1	0	0
End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)	10	5	4
Loss of rented accommodation not end of AST	3	3	1
Leaving care, institution etc	1	1	0
Referral from another local authority	0	0	0
Hospital discharge	0	0	0
No Fixed Address	0	0	0
Fled harassment	0	0	0
Left accommodation	0	0	0
Other	1	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>24</b>

### **Parents, Friends/Family no longer willing to accommodate**

- 7.6 The main reason for households approaching us as homeless are as a result of having lost their accommodation because their parents, family or friends are no longer able, or willing, to continue to provide accommodation.
- 7.7 The crisis for family and friends often comes when the family member has, or is expecting, a child and the accommodating household requires them to leave as a result of tensions within the home. During 2005/06 we accepted a duty to 15 households with children or expecting a child, all of whom had become homeless from a relative's or friend's accommodation.
- 7.8 In partnership with neighbouring authorities and Relate, we have set up a Mediation Service, specifically targeting those young people who face homelessness due to a relationship breakdown in the parental home or with friends. Home visits by Housing Advice staff have also been introduced for all parental/friends and family evictions.
- 7.9 Since the introduction of these measures, homelessness from parents and friends has reduced and support and assistance has been provided in overcoming difficulties that do not necessarily have their roots in a housing problem.
- 7.10 In cases where mediation and home visits have not resolved the threat of homelessness then the issue is addressed by the provision of rent deposits via our private sector resettlement scheme. These households are often on low incomes or are reliant on benefits and have no savings or other funds that they can use to assist them in accessing suitable private rented accommodation.

## **Relationship Breakdown**

7.11 During 2005/06, just over 16% of those accepted for re-housing as homeless by the Council had become homeless following a breakdown in their relationship, however none of them involved domestic violence.

## **Assured Shorthold Tenancies**

7.12 Another significant reason for homelessness is the loss of private rented accommodation that has been let on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. Just over 16% of acceptances in 2005/06 were as a result of such a loss. The Assured Shorthold Tenancy is the main type of tenancy found in the private rented sector. This tenancy is attractive to landlords as it offers a market rent and a straightforward re-possession route however it provides tenants with very limited security.

7.13 To end an Assured Shorthold Tenancy the landlord simply serves a Notice requiring possession of the property, to end no earlier than 6 months from the start of the tenancy. This means that even if the tenant has fulfilled all the requirements of the tenancy, the landlord can bring it to an end any time after the initial period.

7.14 Although private housing is fairly short term it does provide a reasonable alternative to bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation. We therefore operate a Private Sector Resettlement Scheme and currently work with approximately 110 landlords and letting agents within Runnymede to provide accommodation.

7.15 The private sector resettlement scheme has resulted in a 60% reduction in the number of people being accepted as homeless. Since November 2003 120 households have used the scheme.

7.16 The private sector resettlement scheme helps to foster good relationships between landlords, tenants and ourselves. The Government have awarded us grant to undertake this work.

## **Homelessness Advice**

7.17 The number of people actually making a homeless application is not the same as the number of people approaching the authority for advice about homelessness including prevention of homelessness advice and assistance. For 2005/06, 168 households who were threatened with homelessness had this threat prevented due to the advice and assistance they received from us.

## **The Housing Needs Register**

7.18 As at April 2006 there were 851 applicants registered on our Housing Needs Register. This does not include our own tenants wishing to transfer.

The table below sets out the number of people on the Register at the beginning of the financial year. It should be noted that a review has recently been concluded of applicants on the register and this has resulted in a reduction in the number of applicants for 2006.

### Households on Housing Register as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006

YEAR	Up to 2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	3+ Bedrooms	Total
2002	325	56	2	383
2003	770	141	31	942
2004	1315	219	48	1582
2005	1441	213	61	1715
2006	738	90	23	851

Source: HSSA 2006

## Housing Supply

### Social Housing

- 7.19 Annually, the supply of affordable housing available to meet the increasing demand is made up of new provision and relets of our own housing stock and RSL accommodation as well as accommodation available through the Key Worker Living Scheme and Homebuy Scheme.
- 7.20 Our Housing Needs Assessment completed in 2005 showed that after supply was taken into account there was a need for 522 units of new affordable accommodation every year to met increasing demand. During 2001 - 2006, 767 units of affordable housing for rent and shared ownership were developed or acquired in partnership with Registered Social Landlords.
- 7.21 The table below shows the '*Basic Needs Assessment Model*'. This brings together the three key elements namely; the backlog of Existing Need, Newly Arising Need and the Supply of Affordable Units. The overall output from these three analytical stages represents the estimated net affordable housing requirement across Runnymede.

<b>Basic Needs Assessment Model</b>		
<b>B: BACKLOG OF EXISTING NEED</b>		
<i>Element</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Final number</i>
1. Backlog need existing households	Number if households currently living in unsuitable housing	2,107
2. <i>Minus</i> cases where in-situ solution most appropriate	In situ (or outside the Borough) solution most appropriate for 1,936 households	Leaves 171
3. <i>Times</i> proportion unable to afford to buy or rent in market	71.2% = 122 – also remove 60 social renting tenants	62
4. <i>Plus</i> backlog (non-households)	Homeless = 35	35
5. <i>Equals</i> total Backlog need		97
6. <i>Times</i> quota to progressively reduce backlog	Suggest 20% as in ODPM report	20%
7. <i>Equals</i> annual need to reduce Backlog		19
<b>N: NEWLY ARISING NEED</b>		
8. New household formation (gross, p.a.)		192
9. <i>Times</i> proportion unable to buy or rent in market	49.0% cannot afford market housing	Leaves 94
10. <i>Plus</i> ex-institutional population moving into community		0
11. <i>Plus</i> existing households falling into need		212
12. <i>Plus</i> in-migrant households unable to afford market renting		383
13. <i>Equals</i> Newly arising need	9+10+11+12	689
<b>S: SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE UNITS</b>		
14. Supply of social relets p.a.	Excludes transfers within social rented stock and includes 'relets' of shared ownership	184
15. <i>Minus</i> increased vacancies & units taken out of management	Lettings opportunities lost	+2
16. <i>Plus</i> committed units of new affordable supply p.a.	Letting opportunities gained	
17. <i>Equals</i> affordable supply	14-15+16	186
<b>18. Overall shortfall/surplus</b>	<b>7+13-17 (per annum)</b>	<b>522</b>

**Source: Housing Needs Survey 2005 (Fordham's Consultants)**

We have produced a Housing Strategy which established a new target for the provision of affordable housing for the period 2007 – 2011.

7.22 The table below shows the total number of properties from our own housing stock allocated to applicants in 2005/06.

<b>Lettings 2005/06 of our own Housing Stock</b>	
Housing Register Allocations	109
Dwellings let through Mutual Exchanges	21
Dwellings let through transfers within own Borough	51
Dwellings let through Mobility arrangements	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>

7.23 A further 180 Registered Social Landlord units were also let. Many of these were new units provided under our affordable housing programme.

7.24 28 of our own units and 20 RSL units were let to homeless applicants during 2005/06. This has assisted in substantially reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation.

### Temporary Accommodation

7.25 We provide a range of accommodation for homeless households to whom we have a statutory and non-statutory homelessness duty. The table below shows the supply of temporary accommodation we provided.

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>Client Groups</b>	<b>No of units available</b>	<b>No of units filled as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006</b>
Shared Facility temporary accommodation	Families and Singles	39	6
Self Contained temporary accommodation	Families and Singles	24	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>63</b>	<b>13</b>

This table shows that our temporary accommodation is currently only around 20% full. This is due to the success of the pro-active work we carry out in homeless prevention and affordable housing supply.

### Bed & Breakfast Accommodation

7.26 Runnymede Borough Council, like many other local authorities, uses B&B accommodation only when presented with an emergency situation, and then not for more than 6 weeks for

families. The average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for households who were unintentionally homeless and in priority need for 2005/06 was 3 weeks.

## **Women's Refuges**

7.27 There are only 3 refuges throughout Surrey, one of which is in Runnymede. The shortage of refuge space has been highlighted as a need across the county. However, homeless households are also able to access refuges nationally and there are good links with refuges in the general region. Households fleeing domestic violence will generally be offered a refuge space as a form of temporary accommodation.

## **Special Needs Accommodation**

7.28 There is a range of special needs accommodation in Runnymede, provided by other special needs housing providers. These include projects for those with mental health problems, learning disabilities, substance misuse issues, care leavers and other vulnerable groups. Accommodation provided may be short-term or long-term and in shared or self-contained houses or flats.

7.29 We work very closely with special needs providers and has nomination rights to most projects. Nominations are made through Runnymede' Accommodation Referral Panel (RARP) to ensure that the correct, suitable accommodation is identified. The service standards and effectiveness of special needs housing will be monitored through the Supporting People contract arrangements.

## **8. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND FUNDING**

- 8.1 In 2005/06 we spent £103,102 on our housing advice and £79,635 on homelessness services. Expenditure for temporary accommodation for 2005/06 amounted to £15,722 for bed and breakfast accommodation costs and £32,770 for rent deposits under the Council's Private Sector Resettlement Scheme, totaling £32,770. For 2006/2007 to date expenditure for temporary accommodation amounts to £2,761 for bed and breakfast accommodation costs and £27,190 for the Council's Private Sector Resettlement scheme, totaling £29,951 to date
- 8.2 Expenditure on bed and breakfast is reducing. This is constrained because of our pro-active stance on the prevention of homelessness. This approach not only reduces expenditure but also ensures that households are being re-housed in a planned manner in more suitable accommodation than just reactively placed in bed and breakfast accommodation on a crisis basis.
- 8.3 We have also received specific grants from the Government towards the prevention of homelessness services and the reduction of bed and breakfast usage over the past few years. This funding has provided a very valuable boost to the resources available to develop and expand our services and the DCLG have confirmed that we will receive a further £40,000 in 2006/07 due to, amongst other things, the success of our Strategy.

### **Funding to Voluntary Organizations**

- 8.5 In addition to direct services, we also contribute to the funding of a number of voluntary organizations that in turn provide important services to the community to assist in homeless prevention.

### **The Citizens Advice Bureau**

- 8.6 The Runnymede Citizens Advice Bureau is funded in part by grants from the Council. In 2005/2006 grant of £70,531 was paid to the CAB.

In partnership with Spelthorne and Hounslow Borough Councils we also fund the post of County Court Administrator at Staines County Court. This post co-ordinates the work of the Volunteer CAB advisors who work on the County Court desk and whose role is to prevent homelessness at the point of litigation. This scheme has been extremely successful since its inception 15 months ago and in the first year saw 163 clients out of which only 23 were given outright possession orders. For 2005/2006 a total of 154 clients were assisted of which 127 had homelessness prevented.

### **Relate**

- 8.7 In 2005/06 we gave Relate a grant of £5,843. We have a specific service level agreement with Relate to provide mediation services for parental/family/friends eviction and relationship breakdown.

## 9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

9.1 We will monitor our Strategy using the following methods:

- Best Value Performance indicators are reported quarterly to our Corporate Management Committee and annually to the Audit Commission.
- The use of Bed and Breakfast, low levels of rough sleeping and progression of the Private Sector Resettlement Scheme will be reported to the Government, a part of the funding agreement.
- All the main elements of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will be incorporated into the Departmental Service Plan which is regularly reported to our Housing & Community Services Committee.
- The Runnymede and Spelthorne Homelessness Task Group will meet regularly to review the strategy action plans for both areas.

**AMENDED ACTION PLAN 2006-2009**

**RUNNYMEDE B.C. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY  
ACTION PLAN 2006-2009**

Targets should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound) with clear **OUTCOMES**

<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS</b>					
<b>TARGET</b>	<b>LEAD AGENCY/OFFICER</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>
Provide support to applicants to ensure that current level of acceptances (24 per annum) is not increased	Housing – HNM	H	Ongoing	DCLG Funding Revenue A/C Budgets	Continued decrease of homeless applications
Establish a mechanism to increase awareness of Discretionary Housing Payments as an aid to preventing homelessness	Housing – HNM	M	December 2007	D.H.P. Grant	Prevention of homelessness of PRS tenants by enabling tenants to retain their tenancy
Establish a protocol to fast track Housing Benefit where this may prevent homelessness	Housing – HNM	M	March 2007	Within existing budgets and resources	Prevention of homelessness of PRS tenants by enabling tenants to retain their tenancy and persuade landlords to provide properties for PSRS.
Strengthen links with CAB over Housing Advice Service they provide through Service Level Agreements and regular meetings	Housing – HNM&CAB	M	Ongoing	DCLG Funding Revenue A/C Budgets	Prevention of homelessness through Staines County Court Desk project. Regular meetings to review joint working arrangements.
Hold annual reviews with voluntary groups who provide support services or preventative services for homeless households	Housing - HHN	H	December 2007	Within existing resources and budgets	Set up regular liaison meetings. Improve working relationships to prevent homelessness and provide support.

Minimise the number of evictions from social housing by keeping evictions in Council's stock to below 5 a year and raising prevention of eviction with RSL's annually	Housing – HNM/Tenancy Management Dept. Enabling Officer	H	Annual target	Within existing budgets and resources	Monitor evictions through annual RSL survey.  Raise good practice through RSL Forum.  Contain evictions due to rent arrears to a minimum level unless applicants through their own actions make themselves intentionally homeless.
To reduce the number of people sleeping rough on any night to below 5.	Housing – HNM	H	Ongoing	Within existing budgets and resources	Keep rough sleepers to below 5.
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASE ACCESS TO PRIVATELY RENTED ACCOMMODATION</b>					
Explore opportunities to bid for funding to expand Private Sector Resettlement Scheme	Housing – HNM	H	Ongoing	Within existing resources	DCLG funding  Increased use of private rented sector and thus prevention of homelessness
Review groups that receive funding for homeless initiatives to ensure that they meet the homelessness prevention agenda for all client groups	Housing – HHN&PSH	H	December 2007	Within existing resources	Increased use of groups to assist priority need client groups and thus prevent homelessness
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: PROVIDE SUPPORT SERVICES TO HOMELESS AND POTENTIALLY HOMELESS PEOPLE</b>					
Undertake TA residents survey to identify what TA improvements residents want and feedback key findings to TA Improvement Group.	Housing – TMO	M	December 2007	Within existing budgets and workloads	To identify improvements to TA.
Ensure the average length of stay in temporary accommodation is below 55 weeks	Housing – HHN&PSH	H	Ongoing	Within existing resources	To improve accommodation provision and convert to self-contained units where possible
Provide a detailed welcome pack to households moving into	Housing – HNM	M	March 2007	Within existing budgets	To improve information and support services to households moving into

Temporary Accommodation					TA.
Complete a feasibility study for redesign or refurbishment options for the Council's temporary accommodation to improve use/comfort and reduce cost.	Housing – HHN&PSH/TMO	H	June 2008	This will require significant resources and may have to be linked to reduced provision	Temporary accommodation that is self contained and that meets required standards
Set up protocol with Social Services for 16/17 year olds assessments	Housing Needs Department - HNM	H	March 2007	Within existing resources Adults & Community Care funding	Conflict resolution and reduced instances of homelessness
Support implementation of the Surrey Teenage Pregnancy Strategy	Homelessness Task Group Surrey County Council Housing - HNM	M	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Reduce levels of teenage pregnancy/provision of appropriate support and accommodation for teenage parents
Facilitate the provision of 20 additional units of supported housing.	Housing – HHN&PSH Surrey Supporting People Registered Social Landlords	M	July 2011	SP Revenue Funding Capital Grants RCGF	Increased accommodation and support for vulnerable homeless households
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: MAKE BEST USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES (land, accommodation, staff, current services)</b>					
Meet the DCLG target of reducing number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010	Housing - HNM	H	By March 2010	Within existing funding DCLG grant funding	Number of households in temporary accommodation reduced by 50% by 2010
Reduce number of empty properties in Borough by a minimum 15 per annum	Enabling Officer	M	Annually	Within existing resources	Empty properties within the Borough brought back into use to assist homeless households
Establish a mechanism to review and monitor advice and information services to ensure they meet the needs of BME communities	Housing – HNM Homelessness Task Group	M	December 2007	Within existing resources	Increased awareness of services available
Undertake a Homeless Audit and produce a new Homelessness Strategy.	Housing – HHN&PSH	H	Audit December 2007 Strategy December 2008	Additional resources may be needed for the Audit.	A comprehensive Strategy is produced that takes account of all

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HNM: Housing Needs Manager  
TMO: Tenancy Management Officer  
DHCS: Director of Housing & Community Services  
HOTS: Head of Tenant Services  
PO: Partnership Officer

2003 ACTION PLAN

1. Action to Prevent Homelessness					
NEED	ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESOURCES	LEAD OFFICER	OUTCOME
1. Improve Housing Advice Services.	Develop and recommend new staffing structure for Councils' Housing Needs Section	New staffing structure to be considered by Housing & Community Services Committee in September 2003 following preliminary consultation.	RBC to consider funding additional post	HHN&S	Achieved
	Strengthen links with CAB over the Housing Advice Service they provide through Service Level Agreement revisions and regular meetings.	Quarterly meetings to be held with CAB from July 2003 onwards Revised CAB SLA to be completed by December 2003	Within existing budgets & resources	HHN&S	Achieved
	Obtain General Advice quality Mark for RBC Housing Advice and information service	January 2004 – January 2005	Some additional resources from a consultant may be required	PO	Not Achieved due to insufficient resources being available
	Training and development plan to be produced for each Housing Adviser	September 2003	Part funded by ODPM & partly by Departmental training budget	HNM	Achieved

	Develop and improve housing advice recording	December 2003		HNM	Achieved. New database installed
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2. Provide more assistance with accessing privately rented accommodation	Set up new temporary post of Private Sector Resettlement Officer	To advertise and recruit to post July – September 2003	OPDM funding	HNM	Achieved
	To widen use of existing RBC funds for rent deposit	Within existing budgets	RBC funding £15,000	HNM	Achieved. Single priority client group now included
	3. Expansion of other advice services/legal advice services	Work through Community Legal Service Partnership to identify further gaps in relation to advice services such as debt advice/ court desk.	Ongoing	CLS funding could be available for developing new posts	HNM
	Housing Needs Manager/Head of Housing Needs & Strategy to sit on CLSP Steering Group	September 2003 onwards		HNM	Partnership Officer sits on CLSP Steering Group

**2. Action to provide a better response to homelessness**

1. Improve Temporary Accommodation	Set up RBC Officer working group – Temporary Accommodation Improvement Group	May 2003	Within existing resources	HHN&S	Achieved
	Undertake TA residents survey to identify what TA improvements residents want and feedback key findings to TA improvement Group	July/August 2003	Within existing budgets & workloads	TMO	Carried forward to 2006 – 2009 Strategy.
	Undertake Feasibility study for redesign and refurbishment options for Ashdene and St Jude's hostels	June 2003 – December 2003	HRA Funding of £15,000 approved by Housing & Community Services Cttee for feasibility studies	T. Fraser (Building Manager – Housing)	Achieved for Ashdene. Still need to consider further.
	Consider Private Sector Leasing Scheme	September – December 2003	Revenue funding would need to be found from existing budgets with		Not required at current time.
	Undertake short/medium term improvements to hostels and hostel management.	June 2003 onwards	Existing budgets	TMO/T. Fraser	Carried forward to 2006 – 2009 Strategy
2.Improve support to households in Temporary accommodation	Provide additional support service to households in temporary accommodation through allocation of housing advice 'key worker' to provide ongoing advice and assistance on general support/welfare matters. Only possible if new staffing structure approved. Improve links with Homestart and FamilyLine	Dependent on revised staffing structure which will be considered by Housing & Community Services Cttee in September 2003  End of 2003	RBC to consider funding additional post  Within existing budgets	HHN&S  HNM	New staffing structure approved and implemented  Not Achieved Carried forward

3. Monitor effectiveness of the new Allocations Policy	Monitor/review the new Allocations Policy to see that sufficient waiting/balance is being achieved between housing those at risk of homelessness and those who are homeless.	Include information in first annual review of Allocations policy – March 2004		HNM	Achieved
4. Investigate levels of, and services for, rough sleepers	Undertake survey of rough sleepers. Analyze results to consider need for night shelter/day time services	April – September 2004  September – November 2004	Assistance from voluntary sector will be required New services would require both capital and revenue funding	HHN&S	Not achieved however the incidence of rough sleeping is being verified with the agencies.

### 3. Longer Term Planning to Minimise Homelessness

1. Maintain an active affordable housing programme to meet continuing housing needs.	Ensure that as far as possible, bids are made to resource schemes within the existing programme and that the target of 750 affordable homes by July 2006 is achieved	2003 - 2006	Transitional LASHG, Housing Corporation SHG, Regional funds, other RBC capital funding	DHCS	767 units provided as at July 2006
2. Establishment of multi agency Homelessness Task Group	Set up first meeting  Set out action plan and terms of reference and plan future meetings	July 2003	Within existing budgets & workloads	HHN&S	Achieved
3. Improve relationships with voluntary groups who provide support services or preventative services for homeless households	Runnymede Rentstart: Set up regular liaison meetings Draft Service Level Agreement in relation to core funding provided by RBC  Runnymede Homestart – invite Homestart to attend team meetings with Housing Needs and Tenancy Management	June 2003 onwards  By September 2003  As required	Existing  Existing	HHN&S  HNM	SLA in place  Carried forward to 2006 – 2009 Strategy.
4. Minimise evictions from Borough Councils & RSL's.	Monitor evictions through annual RSL survey.  Raise good practice through RSL Forum.  Contain evictions due to rent arrears to below 2 per year	Annually  Annually  2003 – 2006	Existing  Existing  None	ENABLING OFFICER  ENABLING OFFICER  HOTS	Not achieved due to staff shortages  Achieved  Carry forward to 2006 – 2009 Strategy

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